

HEALTHY HOMES PROGRAM

The Opportunity Council

Year of Grant: 2000

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Overview and Purpose

The purpose of the Opportunity Council's Healthy Homes Program is to demonstrate cost effective, preventive measures to correct housing-based hazards by implementing them in conjunction with weatherization in owner-occupied homes in four counties of northwestern Washington state. The homes will include those of very low income families with children, aged birth to four years, and in family care providers' homes where the children receive care. Measures carried out will correct multiple safety and health factors that produce asthma and injuries in children. In collaboration with over 30 public and private organizations, the Opportunity Council will then promote the measures in a two-year public education campaign based upon the interventions they have demonstrated in homes. The Opportunity Council requests \$354,912 of Healthy Homes Initiative funding over three years to carry out the proposed program. A total of \$135,990 in matching funds, 28 percent of the total budget, will provide the balance of the \$490,902 required to fully fund the program. In addition there are many in-kind resources that will assist in carrying out the program.

Regional Characteristics

The region covers the northwest corner of Washington State which includes Island, San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties. The area has combined population of 347,900 as of 1999. The demonstration portion of the Healthy Homes Program targets children, ages birth to four, from very low-income households who are being cared for in family home child care programs. These households include Native American children, who have an exceptionally high prevalence of asthma, and recently settled immigrants from the Ukraine. The outreach/public education portion of the program targets all 80,000 children, aged birth to 18, who live in the four counties. Over 40 percent of them live in poverty.

The rainy climate in the northwest corner of Washington state is extremely hard on the region's housing stock. In general, low-income households occupy the area's most dilapidated housing stock. At least half the owner-occupied homes in the area that are over 50 years are occupied by low-income families. Small children living in dilapidated housing are at particular risk because they spend a greater proportion of their time than do school-age children inside their homes or, often, in home-type child care centers.

There are 369 family home child-care providers in the four county area. For over a third of family home providers, their child-care business is the only source of family income. Average gross

earnings for family home providers in the region is less than \$20,000 per year, placing them at low or very low income levels. The Opportunity Council works closely with the area's WorkFirst (welfare-to-work) program, providing training for those seeking to become family child care providers, and direct services to child care providers and families.

Participating organizations

The Opportunity Council is a community action agency, established in 1965. It is the umbrella organization for housing services, child care and early childhood education, homeless and transitional housing, health care, and community information and referral services for three counties in northwest Washington State. With assistance from the Northwest Air Pollution Authority, pediatric allergists, and environmental risk experts, the Opportunity Council and a Western Washington University faculty member will evaluate the demonstration. Thereafter, the Opportunity Council will coordinate public education about the measures and Healthy Homes Initiative principles with two indoor air coalitions, representing over 30 public and private organizations.

Project Implementation

The Opportunity Council of Bellingham will invite and survey all childcare providers from Whatcom, Skagit, Island and San Juan counties. Ten child-care providers and ten families will be selected for the demonstration section of the program. A baseline of current indoor environment conditions and health of the children will be established. Once baseline is established, a scope of work will be created as will a health improvement plan. Opportunity Council weatherization technicians will implement healthy homes improvements and weatherization. Pediatric allergists, affiliated with the Indoor Air Coalition, will conduct medical exams, health improvement plans and follow up visits. The Northwest Air Pollution Authority will provide expertise in environmental hazards, and sampling and testing techniques.

All interventions will be completed within twelve months. Information about healthy, safe low-income homes will be incorporated in county registries and childcare resource and referral databases. A contracted evaluator will work with the Healthy Homes Program Director and Manager to evaluate the demonstration aspect of the program to assure program efficiency and efficacy. The evaluation will also relate the cost of the measures to the economic resources of low-income families. Evaluation results will be reported to HUD and to the Indoor Air Coalition. Based on the demonstration experience, the Indoor Air Coalitions, led by the Opportunity Council and the Northwest Air Pollution Authority, will launch a public education campaign in the four county area, targeting: low-income homeowners; family home child care providers; county housing authorities; health care providers, including county health departments and health professionals; school districts; builders and contractors; and businesses that market materials to carry out the measures.

Significance to Achieving HUD's Goals and Objectives

The proposed Healthy Home Program is building upon a movement among public and private organizations to address asthma among young children, particularly those from low-income households. The integrated programs of the Opportunity Council strongly facilitate efficient implementation of the demonstration aspect of the program. The effective record of collaborative leadership of the Opportunity Council among public, nonprofit and private organizations in community action reinforce its potential for success in educating the public about Healthy Homes Initiative principles.